



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## NOAA Seeks Comments on a Proposed Rule to Add Red Snapper Recreational Accountability Measures

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a proposed rule that would add long-term recreational accountability measures for red snapper. Accountability measures are measures taken to prevent the harvest from exceeding the quota.

The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on November 21, 2014, with the comment period ending December 22, 2014.

The proposed rule would establish two accountability measures to either mitigate or correct for an annual harvest overage. The first accountability measure would establish a recreational annual catch target. The annual catch target would be 20 percent less than the recreational quota. Projected recreational seasons would be based on the annual catch target rather than the quota. This measure is expected to reduce the probability of exceeding the quota in any given year from 50 percent to 15 percent.

The second accountability measure would be an overage adjustment to apply as long as the population is considered overfished (population is too low). In the event the recreational quota is exceeded, the recreational quota would be reduced in the year following the overage by the amount of the overage. This quota reduction could be modified if the best scientific information available determines that a greater, lesser, or no overage adjustment is necessary. Under this measure, the recreational annual catch target would be set at 20 percent below the adjusted quota.

Similar recreational red snapper accountability measures were put in place for the 2014 recreational red snapper season through an emergency rule following the decision of the U.S.

District Court for the District of Columbia in *Guindon v. Pritzker*, (Mar. 26, 2014). The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) requested NOAA Fisheries implement the emergency rule to address the court decision and set the recreational red snapper annual catch target at 20 percent less than the recreational quota. By using the annual catch target rather than the quota to project the season length, the probability of exceeding the quota was reduced.

However, the emergency rule only applied to the 2014 fishing season and does not address the long-term need for further accountability measures identified by the Court. Therefore, the Council requested NOAA Fisheries, through a framework action, to implement a long-term accountability measures and is the basis for this proposed rule.

### Request for Comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this proposed rule no later than December 22, 2014. We will address all comments specifically directed to the framework action or the proposed rule in the final rule. You may obtain electronic copies of the proposed rule and the amendment from the NOAA Fisheries Web site:

[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2014/rs\\_am\\_framework/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2014/rs_am_framework/index.html) or the e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulation.gov](http://www.regulation.gov).

### How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2014-0120, by any of the following methods:

**Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking

Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2014-0120>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

**Mail:** Submit written comments to Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

**Instructions:** Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be

considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Adobe PDF file formats only.